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THE ART OF DRESS.

WE have said much on Dress, but not so much as the importance of the subject demands, since it is really one of the Fine Arts, and worthy more study in the investigation of its principles than any one gives it. It is true that in it, as in any other branch of Art, taste is innate; yet there is no taste which, either in painting or dressing, will be able to produce the most satisfactory results, without proper attention to those laws which are based on universal principles, fundamental to all Art. The management of the draperies in a picture is admitted, on all hands, to be a great point in painting or sculpture, and the same feeling is required for draping ourselves. The laws which should guide the painter, will also guide us in our self-adorning.

If, then, we apply these laws in this direction, we shall find several maxims, the due consideration of which will be of advantage even to those whose tastes are most correct. Firstly, dress is always to be considered as secondary to the person; and our great study should be, to keep it from being obtrusive at the expense of the individuality of the wearer. It heightens beauty—it never makes it, and we would do well to recollect the old proverb of a silk purse, &c. A person of unprepossessing appearance may hide his or her defects by it, but cannot create new charms. One who insists upon a display of decoration without proper basis, is like an artist who paints costumes on a lay figure. Secondly, it should always accord with the appearance of the wearer, since incongruity makes it ridiculous. Thirdly, it should concentrate its decoration on those parts of the figure most worthy of attention. This is a thing the most essential to perfect effectiveness. The study of Art informs us, that an artist should bestow his labor on those portions of his work which he desires to have most carefully studied, and which he has made, in fact, the centres of attraction. Ruskin justly advises the breaking off an ornamented tassel in the folds of the Perseus of Canova, yet many men are guilty of the same bad taste that Canova was, every hour of their lives. We believe that judgment in such matters is progressing,

for we now feel the absurdity of ornamented shoe and knee buckles, which our ancestors, a generation or two back, did not. We feel the absurdity, we say, though perhaps few could define the nature of it; but, if we consider, for a moment, that the eye and attention should never be carried to the foot or knee, we shall understand that these particular by-gones are obtrusive.

Nature, herself, will indicate the true order of decoration in dress. Regard a fine looking man or woman dressed perfectly plainly, and observe where your attention is drawn. Certainly, first to the face, then to the throat and chest, and then to the hand. Now, place a brilliant shoe buckle on the foot of the person, and you will find that in whatever part of the room you may be, so long as that buckle is in sight, it will divert your eye from face or hand. Custom may deaden the effect of misplaced ornament, and we may therefore suppose that our ancestors were really able to see the faces of their friends, but, at the same time, they must have destroyed, in a measure, the effect of all ornament on their perceptions, and made the jewel, when rightly placed, less valuable than if it had not been improperly used.

The head, then, presents itself as the great subject of artistic study—it is the summit of humanity—the seat of the distinguishing human powers—the medium of expression for the spiritual nature. The savage, whose tattooing is his only art, concentrates his finest workmanship on the face, and when he has no other apparel, he wears necklaces, rings in his ears and nose, and feathers and beads in his hair. Even he feels that the rest is of minor importance. We incline to the opinion, that while every other garment originated in absolute use, the head-dress was, at its beginning, only an ornament, and intended for no utilitarian purpose whatever. The head is both ornamented and clothed by Nature, and the Indian who despises a robe to shelter his back, and even shaves part of the hair off his head, fills the remainder with a gorgeous crown of feathers, which can have no use whatever, in the common sense of the term. Women, who have by Nature finer tastes than men, make the bonnet still a matter of ornament rather than use (and, by the way, reap an utilitarian benefit in

rarely losing their hair), and when in the parlor, their most artistic taste is manifested in the decoration of the hair. The costliest jewels flash there, the rarest and most exquisite flowers are twined in the braids. The styles of "putting up" the hair, we all know, are infinite and expressive, and if a woman wears ornaments, they are more effective there than anywhere else. A gem at the parting of the hair has tenfold the effect that it has at the throat, or on the wrists, and for the simple reason, that it is placed in the position where Nature indicates that it should be, where it may unite with the eye in calling the attention to the seat of intelligence. The eye again passes with pleasure from a diamond necklace to the fair neck that it encircles, or from the bracelet to the well moulded hand, but if the neck is not fair, or the hand well moulded, good taste will be cautious how it decorates them.

Yet there is, in everything genuinely human, so much inherent beauty that no Art can invent anything more attractive than it. There is no eye, even be it a Tartar's, which is not more beautiful than any jewel, if perchance, it be lighted by human love and sympathy, and so, no hand which is not absolutely mal-formed, is less beautiful than the bracelet at the wrist; and to those who love us, even a coarse, hard hand has something lovable; so that we have no right to say that a woman who wears jewels on a badly modelled hand, has no taste, or thinks her hand beautiful. She may put on her jewels for those who think the hand the most perfect ever created. Still it is not less imperative as a rule, that for general company, a woman should only decorate a *beautiful* hand or neck.

The law of dress is, that where you want the eye of a spectator to rest (for we all dress for show), you should concentrate your decoration, leaving the parts of the apparel to which you do not want attention called, as plain and negative as possible—not ugly, as some people, in an affectation of plainness, do (for you have no right to offend the eye of your fellow-man with anything which is ugly), but simply negative.

The fact is that in the range of our own surroundings, we, all have opportunities to develop the highest artistic talent equally

as much as though we painted canvases or sculptured stone, and this is the *great* object to be attained in Art-education—to be artists, not to produce works of Art. Our works will perish, but that which we make ourselves, we shall always remain, imperishable, immortal idealities—clay modelled into the divine image, and adorned with the divine beauty.

INFLUENCE OF LOVE IN THE FINE ARTS.

"I tell thee, Love is Nature's second sun!"—*Geo. Chapman, the translator of Homer.*

FOSCOLA called the Fine Arts the children of Love! A worthy parentage of all that should be noble, gentle, pure—in a word, lovable.

We wish to say something of a power, experienced by all as a most potent spring of association, giving to the pressed leaf an influence akin to the lost one, in whose remembrance it is kept, and putting a sign upon a melody, that shall make us know it among a thousand, and prefer it to its betters, out of regard for her, who used to sing it to us.

Some may remember, when the summer opened upon them for the first time in a foreign clime, as one day they were walking upon the hills, they discovered some of the earliest buttercups of the season. If they had been possessed of the most delicate susceptibilities, they would not certainly, under the same circumstances at home, have passed by the unpretending thing without some token of recognition, though, it may be, they would scarcely have thought of it, since the time, when, as schoolboys, they would hold it under each other's chins, and test their propensities for butter. Many of us, even at that early age, have not, perhaps, enough of that simple, childlike faith, which is so great a boon to the possessor, and the worker of so many marvels, for oftener than otherwise, would we set ourselves up for little skeptics, and feel inclined to doubt the value of a test, unless it proved, what especially our grammar lessons had taught us, that there were exceptions to all rules.

But here, under a foreign sky, and amid all the surroundings of a strange land, we find a yearning love of home can disclose, in the meanest herb, a beauty that had only waited to be seen, and are taught that—

"Things base, and vile, holding no quality,
Love can transmute to form and dignity."

This, we shall call the appreciative power of love, which is common to all men, possessed of sufficient susceptibilities—and, in the artist, distinguishes by degree the true from the affected one. There is another influence which may be termed the creative power of Love, and which peculiarly belongs to the artist.

The world is knit by sympathy, and the highest of sympathy is love! Our thoughts are constantly tinged by a radiance from what we most love. When painter or poet give us their creations, as surely as we discover some likeness of their own natures in them, so surely there is a trace of the ideal of their chiefest love. Was not the color of Dante's pencil taken from the

object of his earthly love, to form the angelic being of his paradise? "The face of Raphael's mother," says one of our elegant essayists, "blends with the angelic beauty of all his madonnas. Titian's daughter and the wife of Correggio, again and again meet in their works." Rauch has told us, that the success of his masterpiece, the statue of the late Queen of Prussia, was chiefly caused by his enthusiastic love for her qualities, and a loyal admiration of her character. The impulse sometimes takes the form of a religious enthusiasm, as was the case of Dannecker, in his daily contemplation of a vision of the Saviour, whose figure seemed to haunt him, "visiting him in sleep, and calling him from his bed to work." Need we longer wonder at the statue of the Redeemer?

The glorious conceptions of the great masters seem to confront any scruple we may have at seeing the holiness of the Son, and Her who bore Him, made the object of Art, since they appeared on earth, in the semblance of mankind. But here, we think, the conceptions of the artist should stay. The Father has shown himself only symbolically, in a glory, or by the still, small voice, and even the all-prevailing power of a religious love, combined with a transcendent genius, have scarcely seemed competent to afford to man a more palpable shape of the Most High, than those in which He has manifested Himself. High as may be the Art of Michael Angelo, in the Last Judgment, equal though it may be to that of Raphael in the Transfiguration, the word of the latter gains in a completion of the ideal, what the master-piece of Buonarrotti must always fail in, by reason of a necessarily unattainable super-terrestrial sight. The Transfiguration *was* witnessed of men. The Day of Judgment is yet to be. Lorenzo Lippi, the rival of Salvator, held it for a maxim to paint only what could be seen, and leave to poetry the illimitable bounds of thought. Certainly, the truth of such a remark is not in all cases to be upheld; for it would seem no more in poetry, than in painting, can the august majesty of the Father be attained. Witness the Jehovah of Milton; we cannot think him the Lord God. There is something wanting; and that something is precisely what distinguishes the King of Heaven from his subject mortals. Here, indeed, no love can aid us, unless it be love in God Himself, and that is not "of earth, earthly."

One of the best instances of the triumph of Love in Art is the history of that type of head, so easily recognized as that of Christ, which deserves, at least, the merit of being a faithful attempt at a portrayal of the ideal of the union of such attributes as were His, whether we assent or not to the opinion, that it has failed in the result. The earliest Christians, after his personal appearance was forgotten, believed in the literal interpretation of the Scriptures, where reference is made to the meanness of his person. After a while, now and then, some one would venture to show a spark of philosophy, and intimate something of a spirit of Art, in believing that the Deity could not dwell in a mean shape. The fourth century came, and with it, an awakening of a Love of the Saviour, and the result was, we no longer find any of these debasing conceptions among the great

writers of the Church, while, on the contrary, except, perhaps, in the case of a few obstinate monks, the majesty of his form is dwelt upon, and a type was created, that was more just to the Redeemer, as well as to their love of Him.

Fervor is undoubtedly one of the strongest aids in Art, and Love is its fountain-source. Yet we have reason to believe that excess here as in many other things, may cause us to overstep our proper limits. For instance, when we see those who hold themselves subject to the See of Rome, bow before the image of a black Virgin, arrayed in gauzes, and bespangled with tinsel and paper flowers, as we once saw at the Church of Cleri, on the banks of the Loire, though we will not take it upon ourselves to deny the worshippers all of the most desirable qualities of a religious veneration, yet we must feel, and refined Catholics will agree with us, that love in such cases has degenerated into superstition, and instead of elevating in the ideal, has only debased. So much for an excess of indiscriminating love. On the other hand, even a Protestant feels an awakening of Love in him for some of the symbols of the Romish Church, not, indeed, amounting to an adoration of them, but enough to conduce greatly to an appreciating of such as works of Art. This is the case, when we stand before a fine Madonna and Child; and the reason is, perhaps, because the ideal appears humanized to us, and coming nearer to our earthly passions and sympathies, we are enabled, partially, to forget, that the dross of mortality was wanting there.

There is another instance in which the power of love may not be conducive to the advancement of Art—as in the case of a love of country giving rise to an exclusive love of national Art, thus placing sectional limits for admiration in matters that should be cosmopolitan in their range, because speaking a language which is not addressed to the ear alone, but to the eye, as the inlet of the understanding and heart of all nations. Thus Scotch music finds few admirers out of Scotland, yet many a clansman, who confesses no music in his soul, will hum a Scotch air, and love it too, because it is Scotch. Now, unless there were some, who sufficiently acknowledge a world-citizenship, and can see that such a love were more worthily bestowed, the ear of Edinburgh might never hear the finest productions of an Art so purely cosmopolite as music.

We have already spoken of the creative power of love, as peculiar to the artist himself, and the question arises, how can it be best directed. Schlegel has written, "In the Fine Arts, to imitate merely is of no account. What we borrow must be again born in us, if we would arrive at a poetical effect." The object, then, is to fuse into our nature the essence, so to speak, of what we would portray, and work rather from its effect in us, than from the merely visible, which the veriest boor might see, or be taught to see. The chief incentive to further this system of assimilation, is a love for the object. Indeed, the assimilation follows the love, whether we will it or not. Thus our own gestures become like those of our friend. So the features of the wife will become to resemble, in a measure, those of the husband, because of a continual loving contemplation of his face, and the